

## **GARY W. SCHONS**

Of Counsel  
Best Best & Krieger

### **PROFILE**

Career prosecutor and administrator, public agency attorney with 42 years of experience as a litigator, criminal justice professional, and public integrity compliance legal advisor, with a commitment to public service, professional ethics and personal integrity.

### **EXPERIENCE**

Of Counsel, Best Best & Krieger, San Diego, 2014-Present

- Head firm's Public Policy & Ethics Compliance Group
- Advise and represent clients and agencies before the California Fair Political Practices Commission
- Provide training in compliance with AB 1234
- Advise firm partners and clients on public integrity compliance, including the Political Reform Act, Public Records Act, Brown Act-Open Meetings Law, Conflicts of Interest

Adjunct Professor of Law, University of San Diego School of Law, 2017-2018

- Lecturer in Criminal Procedure I & Moot Court

Special Deputy State Bar Trial Counsel, 2016-Present

- Act as State Bar Chief Trial Counsel in "conflict" matters
- Investigate allegations of violations of State Bar Act and Rules of Professional Conduct
- Charge and conduct discipline proceedings before the State Bar Court

Senior Advisor for Law & Policy (Deputy District Attorney), San Diego County District Attorney's Office, 2011-2014

- Advise District Attorney and Executive Attorney Staff on implementation of developments in statutory and case law, case specific strategies and outcomes and office policy and practices.
- Assist office prosecutors in complex and sensitive litigation and appeals.
- Served as Director of Training and Assistant Chief of Appellate Division.
- Advise on all aspects of office's appellate practice and coordinate with Attorney General, CDA and sister district attorney offices.

Trial Counsel, California Commission on Judicial Performance, San Francisco, 2010-2016

- Conduct all litigation (Formal Proceedings) on behalf of Commission incident to public discipline, censure, removal and bar of state judicial officers; includes pre-charging investigation, drafting of Notice of Formal Proceedings, pre-hearing discovery, evidentiary hearing before panel of Masters, and presentation of case to Commission members.
- Serve as staff counsel on "conflict matters" including investigation and reports to Commission on complaints and other matters regarding judicial officers as directed by the Commission.

Senior Assistant Attorney General, Appeals, Writs & Trials, Criminal Division, San Diego, 1991-2011

- Supervised office of 75 Deputy Attorneys General who represent the People in criminal trials, felony appeals and habeas corpus proceeding in the state and federal courts, with jurisdictional

responsibilities for the counties of San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial and Inyo. The office litigated over 2,500 appellate, habeas corpus and felony trial cases annually and was responsible for over 200 death penalty appeals.

- Supervised the legal team in the final proceedings leading to California's first execution since 1967, that of Robert Alton Harris in 1992. The San Diego office completed proceedings resulting in five of California's thirteen executions. The office also secured convictions in a number of felony cases ranging from first degree murder to public corruption, completed the most extensive judicial misconduct inquiry in state history, and secured major decisions in the United States Supreme Court and the state and federal appellate courts on issues including the death penalty and the "3 Strikes" law.

Deputy Attorney General, Special Prosecutions Unit, Criminal Division, 1976-1991

- Investigated and prosecuted public corruption, organized crime, major narcotics, major fraud, money laundering and asset forfeiture cases in the state and federal courts.
- Served a Special Assistant United States Attorney in the Central (LA) and Southern (SD) Districts of California and was assigned cases with the Los Angeles Organized Crime Strike Force, the Financial Investigations Task Force and the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.
- Headed the Police Corruption Unit of the San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force
- Briefed and argued numerous cases in the California Supreme Court and Court of Appeal.

## **EDUCATION**

Juris Doctor (*magna cum laude*), University of San Diego School of Law, Member *San Diego Law Review* (published), Appellate Moot Court Board, National Team 1976

Bachelor of Arts (cum laude), Philosophy, University of San Diego 1973

## **COURT ADMISSIONS**

United States Supreme Court; California Supreme Court; United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit; United States District Court for the Central & Southern Districts of California

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS, BOARDS AND AFFILIATIONS**

California District Attorneys Association

Board of Visitors, University of San Diego School of Law

Alumni Board (Past President), University of San Diego School of Law San Diego County

Bar Association, Judicial Evaluations & Ethics Committees

## **HONORS AND AWARDS**

John J. Meehan Career Achievement Award (2018) and William E. James Award (outstanding member of the Attorney General's Office)(1991) California District Attorneys Association; Commanding Officer's Citation, San Diego Chief of Police, 1991; Lecturer of Merit, National College of District Attorneys, 1992; Distinguished Alumni Award, U.S.D. School of Law, 2002; Order of the Coif (Honorary), U.S.D. School of Law, 2008